

A Collection of Malay Proverbs.

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“To the administrator and the magistrate, and to the judge especially, there is an apparently small accomplishment, which can be turned into a mighty lever for gaining a hold on the people: the apt quotation of proverbs, maxims, and traditional verses and sayings. They are always well worth study. Quote an agricultural aphorism to the farmer, quote a line from one of his own popular poets to the man of letters, quote a wise saw in reproof or encouragement of a servant, and you cannot but perceive the respect and kindly feeling that is produced. Say to the North Indian, who comes with a belated threat: “You should have killed the cat on the *first* day;” stay a quarrel with the remark that “When two fight one will surely fall;” repeat to one in trouble a verse from one of the Indian mediaeval reformers; jingle a nursery rhyme to a child; quote a text from the Pali Scriptures to a Burman or a text from the Koran to Musalman; speak any one of these things with all the force, vigour and raciness of the vernacular, and you will find as your reward the attention arrested, the dull eye brightened, the unmistakeable look that comes of a kindred intelligence awakened. The proverbs of a people do not merely afford a phase of anthropological study; they are a powerful force working for influence.”— Sir Richard C. Temple, Bt.

Two words of explanation are necessary.

First, as regards matter. *Proverb* has been interpreted in the liberal sense of Webster's definition, *an old and common saying; a phrase which is often repeated; especially a sentence which briefly and forcibly expresses some practical truth, or the result of experience and observation; a maxim; a saw; an adage.* Indeed, where exceptional interest appeared to justify the liberty, I have included expressions that are still in the undemarcated borderland between proverb, idiom, and slang. Only phrases heard in actual conversation with Malays have been recorded.

Second, as regards arrangement. The requisites of a proverb are said to be *shortness, sense, salt, and general acceptance.* The Naning and Johor proverbs do not all comply with this last requisite: the terse wit of Johor would be caviare in Naning; just as the homely and at times uncouth brogue of the Naning peasant is almost unintelligible to the educated Johor Malay. The proverbs have therefore been grouped in three divisions. The first division consists of widely known proverbs not included in the published collections of Sir W. E. Maxwell and Sir Hugh Clifford. The second, of proverbs collected in Naning during the years 1907 and 1908. The third, of proverbs collected at Batu Pahat, Johor, during the years 1911 and 1912.

For the avoidance of redundant explanations, I have attempted, in setting down the Naning proverbs, a sort of sequence, I hope without great sacrifice of exact interpretation.

Sir W. E. Maxwell's paper in Volume I of this Journal, and Mr. R. J. Wilkinson's essay in the series of Papers on Malay Subjects, have made unnecessary any remarks on the general characteristics of the Malay proverb. The homely nature of most of the Naning expressions, at least, well illustrates Mr. Wilkinson's conclusion, that his proverbs show the Malay of the Peninsula to be a person far more addicted to curry and rice than to the methods of barbarism for which he was once romantically famous.

I regret that modern taste compels the exclusion of many of the most interesting and characteristic of Malay proverbs. The genius of Malay speech makes the vernacular inoffensive: but translation and explanation would be intolerable, save perhaps in a page of Burton or a footnote of Gibbon, and there too "veiled" "in the obscurity of a learned language."

Part I.

Part I. The proverbs in this division have been collected in various parts of the Peninsula, and are, nearly all of them, I believe, the common property of the Peninsular Malays. Most of them have been heard in at least two different places.

1. *Adat orang mēngail, kalau ikan lēpas bēsar-lah,*
the custom of anglers, if a fish escapes it was a big one.
The boast with an "if."

2. *Minyak duyong mēřēndang duyong.*
Mermaid's oil to fry the mermaid.

This proverb has two meanings,

- (1) "hoist with his own petard;" and
- (2) to repay tit for tat.

In the second sense I have heard it used to defend the *potting* off an opponent's ball at billiards, by a player whose ball has been *potted* previously. Quoted with a different meaning in *Kiliran Budi**, 1107.

The following proverb has a similar sense.

3. *Hutang darah di-balas darah,*
blood-debts repaid with blood.

To repay in kind, tit for tat. This phrase seems to have originated as a maxim of the Adat Temenggong, the Malay *lex talionis*, the main precepts of which are,

siapa bēřhutang siapa mēmbayar,
siapa salah siapa bēřtimbang,
siapa bunoh siapa kēna bunoh;

* This is a collection of Malay proverbs.

who owes pays the debt,
 who sins pays the penalty,
 who slays is slain.

4. *Běrsilat ka-pada buta,*
 fencing with a blind man.

The proverb has two meanings,

(1) an easy victory over an unskilful opponent in any contest, *e.g.* chess; and

(2) vain display wasted on the unappreciative.

In this sense compare,

měragakan suara ka-pada pěkak,

měragakan pakaian chantek ka-pada buta;

to show off a voice to the deaf,

to display fine clothes to the blind.

5. *Makan di-luar berak di-dalam,*
 eating outside the house, relieving nature within.

Behaviour, to Malays, the reverse of natural propriety, and so a proverb for

(1) bad manners, or

(2) topsy-turvydom. (*Kěrja balik bokong.*)

6. *Musoh di-dalam sělimut,*
 an enemy under the coverlet;

a traitor in one's own house. The proverb is also used in the same sense as

pagar makan tanaman,

the fence eats the crop.

7. *Pandai mēnchuri měrasa mēndapat,*
ta' pandai mēnchuri těrasa těrikat;
 a skilful thief feels the joy of profit,
 an unskilful thief the pain of bonds.

Thefts, and amorous intrigues, are rewarded, and judged, according to their success or failure.

8. *Pandai mēnchuri sa-rasa mēndapat,*
ta' pandai mēndapat sa-rasa mēnchuri;
 skilful thefts appear like earnings,
 unskilful earnings appear like thefts.

The proverb illustrates the Malay non-moral admiration for skill and intelligence, noted by Mr. Wilkinson in his paper on Malay proverbs. The meaning of *mēnchuri* is not quite so harsh as the English *theft*; the word describes all stealthy gettings.

9. *Orang mau sa-ribu daya,*
orang ta' mau sa-ribu daleh;
 where there's a will there are a thousand ways,
 where there's no will, a thousand excuses,

sa-ribu payah, a thousand difficulties, and *sa-ribu bēnchana*, a thousand dangers, are common variants of the last line.

10. *Dahulu parang sēkarang bēsi*,
once a knife, now mere iron;

the decay of physical, mental, or, particularly, sexual powers. The line also occurs as the second line of *pantun*, to balance and foreshadow,

dahulu sayang sēkarang bēnchi,
once love now hate,

in the fourth line. Compare the proverb *dahulu timah sēkarang bēsi*, No. 111 in Sir W. E. Maxwell's collection in volume XI of this journal.

11. *Makan sireh bibir ta' merah*,
eating betel, but the lips are not red.

A proverbial expression for feminine jealousy. I am unable to satisfy myself as to how the phrase acquired this significance: perhaps the retention of the crimson betel juice in the mouth suggests the concealment of the hidden fire of jealousy.

12. *Mimpikan kain di-makan tikus*,
dreaming of the sarong eaten by rats;
suspicion of impending disaster, particularly of conjugal infidelity.

13. *Bērgantung tidak bērtali*,
bērsalai tidak bērapi;
hanging without a string,
scorching without a fire.

The position of a woman deserted by her husband, but not divorced; receiving no maintenance (*nafkah dlahir batin*) but unable to obtain a separation.

Sir W. E. Maxwell gives another meaning of his proverb in his collection in volume I, No. 25.

14. *Sa-hari bēbini sa-hari bērudah fikiran*,
sa-hari bēranak sa-hari tua;
each day of married life a day of changed mind,
each day of parentage a day of ageing.

Domesticity after the wild life of the bachelor.

15. *Bagai kapur di-hujung tēlunjok*,
like lime on the forefinger tip;

the remains of the lime smeared on the betel-leaf for chewing, very easily wiped off.

The precarious position of a person of little importance, easily dismissed when desired: for example the position of servants whose discharge rests on the whim of their employer, or of a wife whose divorce lies with the caprice of her husband.

The next proverb is somewhat similar,

16. *datang ta' bĕrjĕmpuť, pulang ta' bĕrhantar,*
arriving—unwelcomed, departing—unescorted;
a person of no importance, who deserve and receives little consideration.

17. *Tundok kĕpala bukan mintak pijak,*
bowing the head, but not inviting the foot to tread thereon.

Due deference paid to rank need cause no less of self-respect. There is a mean between obsequiousness and rudeness, not always achieved by Europeans, seldom missed by Malays.

18. *Ka-tĕngah pun boleh, ka-tĕpi pun boleh,*
to the middle will serve, to the edge will serve.

A hardy fellow who will take the rough with the smooth. The absence of fastidiousness or effeminacy. Contrast the Johor expressions *Tuan Putĕri Lilin* and *Tuan Putĕri Dahi Gula*, below.

19. *Bĕrgundek mĕnĕbus bĕrbini mĕnghantar,*
for a mistress a purchase-price, for a wife a bride-price.

Luxuries, of all kinds, require to be paid for. Also, 'six of one and half a dozen of the other;' as the more common proverb *sa-tali tiga wang*.

20. *Gĕroh luka ajal mati,*
misfortune—a wound, destiny—death.

An expression of resignation uttered before any enterprise. The issue, whether a small reverse or a supreme disaster, rests with providence.

21. *Lain di-niat lain di-takdir,*
one thing desired, another thing decreed.

Hopes disappointed or fulfilled diversely: a close parallel to the English proverb,
"man proposes, God disposes."

22. *Gĕroh ta' mĕnchium bau,*
a misfortune that gave no warning smell.

A sudden and unexpected disaster: the metaphor is perhaps a jungle metaphor from the warning smell of wild animals.

23. *Mati tidak karna sumpah,*
hidup tidak karna kaul;
we die, not for curses,
we live, not for prayers.

A sententious expression of fatalism regarding the issue of any undertaking. I heard it used in criticism of a "cooling" ceremony undertaken by a Pawang at the Supreme Court, Singapore, before the commencement of a recent trial.

24. *Biar bĕrgĕnting jangan putus,*
let the tie be slender, but not severed.

A maxim advising the keeping of a reserve, however small, of provisions or other resources; or the maintenance of any tie.

The exact meaning of *gěnting* is a narrow connection of any sort, such as the neck of a promontory, or a ridge joining two hills, or a mountain pass.

- 25.** *Walau sa-jěngkal lautan,*
though but a span—the sea,
with all its dangers and uncertainties. A maxim of prudence at sea,—the caution *jangan di-chuai*, do not make light of it, is often added in quotation—; and a warning against foolhardiness in other matters. Compare the English proverb,

“Do not crow before you are out of the wood.”

- 26.** *Děkat ta' těrchapai, jauh ta' běrapa antara,*
near—but not to be grasped, far—but no great way off.

So near and yet so far: something out of reach, but visible, as the shore to a boat becalmed, or well-guarded mistress to a lover. Compare the *pantun*,

di-pandang dapat di-pětek ta' boleh,

laksana bunga di-dalam chěrmin;

the eye can see, the hand cannot pluck,

like a flower in a mirror.

- 27.** *Bagai běrteh di-goring,*
like rice in the husk toasting;

the husks keep splitting off with a crackle, and the rice shows white.

Extreme plausibility; especially, ready specious answers to cross examination. In Malay romances the expression is used to describe the noise of the continuous firing of cannon.

- 28.** *Tidak běrat di-ampu-ampu,*
not heavy, but braced and stayed;
a slight burden with unnecessary supports.

Wholly unnecessary precautions. It is sometimes quoted with the more common proverb, its converse,

tiada běban batu di-galas,

having no burden, to carry a stone on the back;

an expression for the creation of gratuitous difficulties.

- 29.** *Sa-kali měrěngkoh dayong dua tiga pulau těrlangsong,*
sa-kali měngorak pura dua tiga hulang lang sai;
one tug at the oar, and two or three islands are past,
one fulfilment of resolve, and two or three debts are paid.

This proverb, like most Malay proverbs, has many applications. I have heard it used to describe the punishment of several offences at one reckoning, or the occasional exertion of a clever but idle man. See *Kiliran Budi*, No. 202.

- 30.** *Datang ribut, kěluar sěmut,*
entering—a whirlwind, departing—an ant.

The deflation of the blusterer. Compare the English proverb,

“coming in like a lion, going out like a lamb.”

31. *Běrsěrah bėrkabilan,*
bėroja bėrpėgang ekur;
 entrusting a task, but overseeing it,
 exciting the fighting cock, but holding his tail.

An incomplete trust that adds a jealous supervision.

Oja is the action of the trainer (*juara*) in setting his bird against its opponent. (Cf. *bega*.)

32. *Tumbok rusok biar sėnak,*
 a dig in the ribs should cause an ache.

Tumbok rusok is a common colloquialism for a quiet bribe. The proverb is a piece of Malay worldly wisdom: if a bribe is offered, let it be considerable; small bribes are ineffective in two ways, they fail to procure the service required, and they give the donor no hold over the acceptor of them. A good example of *the wisdom of many, the wit of one*.

Part II.

Part II. Naning Proverbs. The speech of Naning Malays is rich in proverbial expressions of all kinds, saws, adages, and maxims, both in prose and metre. Indeed, the origin of many proverbs common in Johor and Perak can be traced in Menangkabau *tėrumba*, where their form and meaning are often widely different from those subsequently acquired.

The proverbs quoted below are classed roughly in two groups, the first group dealing with the problems of married life, the second with the administration of customary law.

1. **Proverbs on married life.** The delicate problems of married life are of perėnnial interest to Malays, and gain peculiar importance in Naning from the practice of exogamy. A marriage is a matter of tribal interest, a miniature alliance between two clans. The husband at marriage passes from his own tribe into that of his wife, is subject to her family, lives in her house, tills her fields. Divorce, like marriage, has a tribal import: as in Aceh, it is seldom merely an expression of ill temper or a mark of the cooling of first love; but rather a deliberate step taken with all proper courtesies. The man leaves his wife's tribe and house; the children remain with her; he removes the personal property brought by him at marriage; joint earnings are divided.

It is the duty of parents to arrange early marriages for their children, for the young unmarried Malay of either sex, in Naning as elsewhere, is very much the child of nature.

33. *Rumah tinggal sarang hantu,
orang bujang sarang fitnah;*
the empty house is a roost of ghosts,
the unmarried a roost of slanders.

Marriage is safest: it avoids the calumnies that attend on single life.

There are saws to warn the youthful of the folly of wild oats; for example,

34. *lěngkuas pintu kandang,
sělera puas badan měnyandang;*
boughs to bar the cattle-shed,
passion sated, health fled.

Certainly married life is best,

35. *daripada běrputing baik běrhulu;*
better a hafted blade than a haftless blade.

(*Puting* is the projecting butt of a knife-blade which is buried in the handle.)

A Malay seems never too old for thoughts of marriage,

36. *tua-tua tupai ta'tidor di-atas tanah;*

However old the squirrel he will not sleep on the ground.

(*Glia uban*, the madness of grey hairs, is another expression for uxorious age.)

Naning betrothal and marriage are encompassed with many ancient formalities, strongly resembling the Acheh custom. The formal proposal and acceptance are made with set speeches and a great display of humility. A proverbial expression much used in self-depreciation by parents, the hand of whose daughter is sought, is,

37. *tuah kěbun běrpagar,
tuah rumah běrtunggu,
tuah anak běrlaki;*
the fortune of a garden is a fence,
of a house an inmate,
of a girl a husband.

Another expression commonly used on such an occasion is,

38. *kěchil tapak tangan nyiru di-tadahkan;*
my hands too small, (to receive your favours),
I hold out a winnowing tray.

The irregular methods of marriage in Naning are very similar to those in Rembau described fully in "Rembau," Parr and Mackray, Volume 56 of this Journal. The following proverb describes the requirements of the man who essays the method of marriage by storm (*měrumahi, tangkap běrani, panjat rumah*), by forcible entry into the house of the chosen lady.

39. *Dada bidang kulit-nya tahan,*

*mulut bachar mas-nya padan,
hati bĕrani sĕnjata tajam;*

a broad chest and a tough hide to it,
a loud mouth and money to match,
a stout heart and sharp weapons therewith.

He must be prepared for failure of his suit and a severe drubbing as well, unless he possesses these requisites. Nowadays the second qualification is found the most valuable, especially if a prosecution for criminal trespass, before an unwary Magistrate, follows the attempt.

A type of the useless son-in-law, the worthless acquisition to the tribe of the wife, is the stupid fellow, doomed to misfortune,

40. *ka-laut pĕchah pĕrahu,
ka-darat pĕchah pĕriok;*
at sea he wrecks the boat,
ashore he breaks the cooking-pot.

He will waste the property of his wife and her clar, as well as his own bringings. (The expression is also used as a curse.)

Monogamy, a natural result of the exogamic practice, is the rule in Naning in spite of the Muhammadan sanction for polygamy. Occasionally a richer peasant or Penghulu will attempt the adventure of a second wife: but the rivals will resort, sooner or later, to the ordeal of a public personal combat. Separate establishments, miles apart, are essential. The suggestion of

41. *rimau dua sa-kandang,
balam dua sa-sangkar;*
two tigers one pen,
two ground-doves one cage;

is not to be entertained for a moment.

The Naning Malays are neither more nor less moral than Malays elsewhere. Intrigues are not unknown;

42. *ĕnau sa-batang dua sigai,
sa-jinjang dua pĕlĕsit;*
one sugar-palm two climbers,
one master two familiars;

is the proverbial description of the lady with a lover as well as a husband.

Sigai is the bamboo pole by which the tapper climbs to tap the *mayang* for the sugar-juice.

In Johore and Rembau this expression describes a peculiar offence against tribal custom. See "Rembau," Parr and Mackray, *Journal* No. 56.

Divorce must have been rare in the pre-Muhammadan days of the Adat: but there are old sententious aphorisms suggesting that it was not unknown.

43. *Baik tunang-nya jahat,
hidup tunang-nya mati,
kaseh tunang-nya chërai;*
the betrothed of good is evil,
the betrothed of life is death,
the betrothed of love is separation.

The phrase is used as a polite expression of resignation, when the details of a divorce are being arranged.

There are characteristic Malay warnings against too passionate affection,

44. *kënanngkan bini, anak orang,
kënanngkan anak, chuchu orang;*
affection for a wife—the child of others,
affection for a child—the grandchild of others;
a reminder of the separations of death or divorce, with a special significance for Malays living under Menangkabau custom, by which, as mentioned above, on a divorce the children remain with the mother, and the man leaves the house and tribe of the wife, and returns to his own clan.

Like marriage, divorce, when it comes, concerns two clans, and requires the observance of all due formalities.

45. *Masok pandang ka-hadapan,
këluar pandang ka-bëlakang;*
entering, look forwards,
departing, look backwards;
says a common proverb. The most peaceful Malay peasant may be roused to bloodshed by a gross rudeness to his womenfolk. Many of the stabbing cases that occur from time to time in the Naning district have their origin in the neglect of this maxim.

A more definite warning is conveyed by the following homely proverb,

46. *bërtukar mënghalau mënyepak,
bërtukar mënghela mëngëmbus;*
the change that drives out, provokes a kick,
the change that drags out, a snort.

The metaphor is of the urging of a reluctant buffalo from the field: drive her from the rear, she kicks back; drag her by the nose-ring, she snorts threateningly at heel. So a too abrupt or rough divorce will entail an unedifying encounter with the lady herself, and may provoke reprisals from her menfolk.

The whole influence of the Adat is against frequent divorce. And so the much-married man of other Malay States, of whom the bee that hums from flower to flower (*kumbang mënyëring bunga*) is the type, is not greatly admired in Naning. He is discouraged with some such ancient jest as this,

47. *orang bėrbini-binian,*
bėranak ta'mėnyuroh,
bėrtanam ta'makan;
 the man who flits from wife to wife,
 gets children but commands them not,
 plants crops but eats no fruit thereof.

But he may retort with a jingle at the expense of the man who marries a widow, and has the thankless burden of step-children,

48. *kā-bilek ka-dapur,*
menggulai asam pėdas;
itek bėrtėlur,
ayam mėnėtas:
 to the room, to the kitchen,
 curry the acid fruits;
 a duck lays the egg,
 a hen hatches it.

To quote the first two lines would be sufficient for his purpose. The other might reply with a pantun,

- Naik ka-bukit mėmbėli lada,*
lada sa-biji di-bėlah tujuh:
apa sakit bėrbini janda,
anak tiri boleh di-suroh?
 Climb the hill and buy pepper,
 a pepper-corn split in seven:
 what ails it to marry a widow,
 with step-children to command?

The idea of the Naning Malay is a happy marriage of equality with a loyal sharing of the bitter and the sweet.

49. *Bėrat sama di-tatang,*
ringam sama di-lėtakkan;
 together supporting the heavy,
 together setting down the light.

And in Naning a well-made marriage has the moral support of two clans, not merely of two families. Nowhere in the Peninsula are there to be found more examples of loyal life-long unions. As the proverb says,

50. *kėdapatan makan kėnyang pėrul,*
kėdapatan budi sampai mati:
 the winning of a meal fills the belly,
 the winning of a loyal heart is a lifelong treasure.

2. **Proverbs on the administration of the Adat.** The second class of proverbs deals with the administration of customary law. The Custom to-day surviving in Naning is but a maimed fragment of the Adat Menangkabau, whose former fullness could be expressed in the saying,

*alive we are in the womb of custom,
dead we are in the womb of earth.*

After the Naning war, most regrettable of all military operations, the political constitution of the State was destroyed, so fully and deliberately, that instructions were even issued "*that the terms 'Dattoo' and 'Sookoo' be not used!*" This would seem to-day an unnecessary precaution: the terms have, indeed, survived. But the Datok Naning, once head of the most powerful State of the Negri Sembilan, is to-day a superior Penghulu on a monthly salary of thirty dollars; the criminal jurisdiction of the Adat is restricted to offences declared by the Procedure Code to be compoundable; and sayings that expressed a peasant's awe of a tribal chief, or his resignation under a hopeless wrong, are now applied to the more or less harmless activities of the kampong elders, or to the interesting behaviour of the new District Officer.

Nevertheless in all questions of property, marriage and inheritance the Adat is still a very present reality to the Naning peasant, and even in criminal matters the *sayings of the old men of former days* have a genuine, if modified significance. Small wrongs are felt as keenly as great ones, *rankling like a little thorn in the flesh*; and their redress is a matter of not less moment to the injured.

The ideal of the Adat is a peaceful settlement of disputes on the lines of ancient precedent, without the issue of a contested trial,

- 51.** *měnanang bėrkėchundang,
alah bėrkėtundokan,
sa-rayu bėrjabat tangan;*
victory — a defeated foe,
defeat — a bowed head,
agreement— a joining of hands;

says the proverb. Even successful litigation is unsatisfactory—it leaves an embittered foe. A Malay is generally a bad, and always an unhappy, litigant: and certainly a Magistrate at Alor Gajah finds that the content of the district increases in proportion as the settlement of compoundable matters on customary lines is encouraged, and the decisions of the Penghulus are judiciously upheld.

But it is premature to attempt the settlement of a quarrel while passions are still hot.

The proverb says,

- 52.** *bunyi godam di-hutan mėrėnggangkan,
bunyi baji di-luar mėrapatkan;*
hammering in the forest is the noise of cleavage,
the sound of wedges without is the noise of bringing
together.

The wedges hammered in the jungle are the wedges that split the trunks: the wedges hammered outside are the wedges (between the rattan bindings and the sticks) to tighten the faggots. Not while angry words are still heard, but only when the first heat has cooled, and the parties are met together, can arbitration be begun. The proverb to describe the perfect settlement—used also to describe the concord of clansmen or friends, is,

53. *kata sama sa-ya,*
běrlěnggang sama sa-rayun,
mělangkah sama sa-děgong,
měnhinggap běrsempulun;
 saying "yes" with one voice,
 walking with one sway and swing of the arms,
 stepping with one tread,
 alighting in a covey.

Where the parties agree to a settlement, it remains only for the tribal elders to amend the injury by awarding compensation,

54. *burok di-baiki,*
kusut di-sěleşaikan;
 the injured is made whole,
 the tangled is made straight.

This is done by seeking and applying the customary remedy,

55. *sa-hari hilang sa-hari di-chari,*
sakit di-ubat, luka di-tasak;
 a day of loss is a day of search,
 the hurt is healed, the wound is stanchèd.

To "search for the custom" (*měnchari adat*) is a phrase with a real significance. When there is an appropriate precedent ready to hand it remains only to apply it,

56. *baju sudah di-sarongkan,*
lěmbaga ada di-tuangi;
 when a coat is ready it is put on,
 when a mould is there the metal is poured in.

And few cases are conceivable for which there cannot be found a customary remedy: for the Adat is omnipresent, has an universal application,

57. *ka-laut měnjadi apong,*
ka-darat měnjadi suloh;
 at sea driftwood,
 ashore a torch;

floating up in every creek and bay, illuminating every darkness. But the "search" for the remedy is often neither short nor easy. The blood-price for a wound, for example, will be varied by the amount of provocation, and also according, in

the words of the Adat, as the wound “grows on the hill, on the slope, or in the valley;” (*tumboh di-bukit, di-lereng, di-lěmbah*;) that is, on the head—where it is visible; on the body—where it is concealed by the clothing; or on the leg—a less expensive limb.

In cases of difficulty reference is often had to the women, who, in Naning as in Acheh, are not only the hereditary guardians of tradition, but frequently show a knowledge of affairs and a sound understanding superior to their menfolk.

When the suspected offender denies his guilt and all offers of arbitration are refused, there is no remedy but a resort to a trial,

58. *putus tali, putus kělawan,*
putus kělikir, rěmpong hidong;
rope broken, cheek-string broken,
nose-ring broken, nostril torn.

The buffalo is unmanageable: there is no hold or means of coercion. And so the matter goes to trial. The complaint must be laid in the proper quarter,

59. *měnumbok ka-lěsong,*
běrtanak ka-pěriok;
pound rice in a mortar,
cook rice in a pot.

A matter that the elder (*ibu-bapa*) is competent to decide, must not be taken to the tribal chief (*lěmbaga*): even the District Officer will be offended if proceedings are commenced by a petition to the Resident.

But the lower authority must loyally support the higher when support is demanded:

60. *lěmah mělapis, chondong měnupang;*
backing the weak, propping the falling.

The matter then goes to trial: but trial under the Adat differs widely from an European inquiry. The Adat has a very wholesome distrust of oral evidence,

61. *běraleh kain ka-balik rumah,*
běraleh chakap ka-balik lidah;
change a sarong behind the house,
change a word behind the tongue.

Lying is easier than changing clothes: privacy is not necessary for the performance.

The Adat method of inquiry is based on a belief in circumstantial as opposed to oral evidence. In this it differs consciously from Muhammadan law,

62. *hukum běrdiri děngan saksi,*
adat běrdiri děngan tanda;
religious law is established by witnesses,
custom is established by signs.

The inquiry begins, then, with a search for the speaking evidence of a sign. It is a maxim of the Adat that each one of *the twelve offences* has its appropriate clue by which the culprit may be detected. For example,

63. *rumbun bakar, bėrpuntong suloh;*
churi samun, tėrtėtas dinding;
upas rachun, bėrsisa makan;
 arson, the butt of a torch;
 theft and pillage, a panel hacked through;
 poison, the remains of the meal.

If no clue is at once apparent, search must be made,

64. *kalau tėrang di-tumpu,*
kalau gėlap di-jala;
 if clear, take footing,
 if dark, cast the net.

The clue found and traced will lead to the culprit,

65. *di-mana anjing mėnyalak di-situ biawak mėmanjat,*
di-mana api bėrpupok di-situ asap kėluar;
 where the dogs are barking, there the lizard is climbing,
 where the fire is piled, there the smoke is issuing.

But when an appropriate *tanda* is once found, the Court holds very fast thereby, and proceeds with the inquiry,

66. *kalau bėrtangkai boleh di-jinjingkan,*
kalau bėrtali boleh di-helakan;
 if there is a handle, it can be held,
 if there is a cord, it can be pulled.

Or,

67. *jika bėrtali tėmpat mėnghela,*
jika bėrjumbai tėmpat bėrgantong,
jika bėrtungku tėmpat bėr-sa-tingkis.
 if a cord, a means to pull,
 if a dangling string, a means to hang,
 if a hummock, purchase for the foot.

An inquiry without a clue to go upon drifts aimlessly,

68. *ibarat gasing bėrpaku tėtap bėrpusing,*
ta' bėrpaku mėrayau;
 a top with a peg spins steady thereon,
 without a peg swings wide.

And finally the decision must be based on the evidence of the clue, evidence that warrants the finding,

69. *mėnyėnchang bėrlandasan,*
mėlompat bėr-sa-tumpuan;
 chop on a chopping-block,
 leap from a taking-off place.

The amount of evidence that warrants a finding under customary law would surprise the student of Stephens, Wills or Phipson. A matter that occurred in Naning in 1908 will illustrate the application of the rule. One morning an unmarried girl entered a certain vernacular school, and removed from a peg the cap of one of the assistant teachers. This unusual immodesty constituted a *tanda*, that was taken by the old men of the two clans concerned, to raise an irrebuttable presumption of misconduct by the young bachelor. He was thereupon compelled, despite his protests, to marry the intruder, she, significantly enough, being deprived of half her bride-price (*chichir bělanja sa-paroh*). The defence,—that the trespass was the device of a hussy to secure a reluctant husband, received little consideration: partly, perhaps, because in a country district, where hard work in the fields is the best guarantee of good morals, the sedentary occupation and considerable leisure of the school-teacher render him essentially suspect, on the Ovidian principle,

otia jucundi causa cibusque mali,

leisure is the cause and food of the pleasant sin.

The deadly effect of a *tanda* is a warning to the wise,

70. *mara hinggap mara těrbang,*
mara bėrgesel sampai lalu,
ėnggang lalu ranting patah;
 danger alights, danger flies,
 danger touches as it passes,
 the hornbill passes, the twig snaps.

Mere coincidence will probably be taken for cause and effect.

The moral for the individual, therefore, is—avoid suspicious proximities; because,

71. *tėrgesek kėna miang,*
tėrgėgar kėna rėbas;
 graze the bamboo, you get the itch;
 jar it, a switch in the face.

The slightest touch of the fine hairs on the sheath of the bamboo (*kėlopak*) sets up an irritation: still more painful is the switch in the face from a twig, that follows a more clumsy collision.

The moral for the judge is—let the inquiry be cautious and thorough. The best judge is he who is

72. *malim biawak bėngkong,*
 skilled in the art of the wriggling lizard,
 climbing slowly from the base to the very top of the tree: the type of the cautious seeker for truth, who is not ashamed to retrace his steps when the line of inquiry has proved wrong.

73. *Sėsat ka-hujong jalan, balik ka-pangkāl jalan,*
sėsat ka-hujong kata, balik ka-pangkāl kata;

astray at the end of the track, back to the base of the track,

astray at the end of the utterance, back to the base of the utterance.

The type of the bad method of justice, the method of insufficient discrimination, is

74. *hukum sērkap,*

the judgment of the thrusting fish-trap;

the cone-shaped trap thrust downwards by a wader in shallow water; all is fish that it encloses. I regret to say that this proverb is commonly used, not without a certain aptness, to describe some phases of English justice, especially the summary trial and conviction of batches of prisoners, such as gang-robbers, hawkers, or gamblers.

A worse judge still, because corrupt, is he who is

75. *malim kubong,*

expert in the art of the flying lemur;

pouncing down where he sees a sure prey, exploiting the suitors of his Court with a nice discrimination.

But, after all,

76. *bajak lalu tanah yang lēmbut,*

the plough bites only where the soil is soft;

the fool who submits to extortion has only his own softness to thank.

Unfortunately, wrong decisions, however honest, will occur at times; and injustices result,

77. *lain bidok lain galang,*

lain bēngkak lain mēnanah,

lain pantat lain chawat;

one man's boat another man's rollers,

one man's swellings another man's runnings,

one man's loins another man's clouts:

one man enjoys the jack-fruit, the gum adheres to another, as a more common proverb has it; one man sins, another suffers.

When this happens the injured person is liable to feel a dissatisfaction that will not be quieted,

78. *tērkilan di-hati tērkēlang di-mata,*

tērasa-rasa ba' duri dalam daging;

rankling at heart, a mote in the eye,

an ever-present irritation like a thorn in the flesh.

He satisfies the judgment of the court because resistance is useless, but his heart does not consent to the payment.

79. *di-unjok di-bērikan,*

pēpat di-luar ranchong di-dalam;

he offers it and gives it,
smooth without, but pointed within,

When the injustice is incurable, it is useless to repine.
Philosophic resignation is the only wisdom,

80. *timun pada dia, pisau pada dia,
lilis tēbal tiada siapa mēnēgah,
lilis nipis tiada siapa suroh;*

he holds the pumpkin, he holds the knife,
if a thick lice—there is no one to restrain him,
if a thin slice—there is no one to command him:

This proverb is frequently quoted with resignation after some erratic and wholly unaccountable decision of the European Magistrate: when, for example, a mild stabbing matter, that under the Adat could have been atoned by the death of a fowl and a fine of twenty rupia (\$7.20), having unfortunately been brought to trial, is met with a sentence of three months rigorous imprisonment.

When the sufferer feels that he has been made the victim of a deliberate injustice, at the hands, perhaps, of some “*flying lemur expert*,” he will vent his feelings with a less veiled complaint; such as,

81. *pěrahu karam sa-kěrat,
limau masam sa-bělah;*
the boat was submerged at one end,
the lime was sour on one side;

a proverb which conveys the suggestion that the other party has been unfairly favoured.

There are, however, traditional rebukes available, with which the old men will upbraid such vulgar recrimination. A favourite one is,

82. *bingong tēngkar, chěrdēk bēgar,
bichara ta' mau kalah,
mēnang ta' pěrnah di-rasa;*
a fool and quarrelsome, cunning and stubborn,
he will not take defeat,
but never enjoys a victory.

The third line amounts, perhaps, to a warning with a prophetic significance.

Or perhaps they will repress the recalcitrant fellow with some doggerel distich, homely but biting, such as,

83. *chěnatur sa-bilah parang,
běrkata ta' di-dēngar orang;*
chěnatur is a sort of axe,
no one listens when he talks.

Or,

84. *gĕlar si-Raja orang,*
dudok di-bĕlakang orang;
 his title—mighty, King,
 his seat—outside the ring.

The victim is not, however, without suitable retorts, more or less penetrating: the quotation of

85. *kĕtok kata ayam, kichau kata murai,*
bongkok dĕk mĕnganyam silap mĕngĕlarai;
 ‘cluck’ cries the hen, ‘chirrup’ cries the robin,
 a hunchback plaits the mat, but still he spoils the
 pattern;

has been known to cause a twinge to the most case-hardened village elder. The special point of the innuendo is this:—a hunchback is well bent over his task, and has no excuse for bad work: the bad decision of the old men is the more reprehensible for their age.

Perhaps he will add the sarcastic reflection,

86. *akal ta’ sa-kali datang,*
runding ta’ sa-kali tiba;
 understanding arrives not in a moment,
 wise judgment comes not at once;

was the cause of their indifferent decision.

suggesting that a haste unsuitable to the abilities of the elders

It is not likely that he will have the last word in the controversy. The resources of the old men are considerable. It is more probable that, if he persists in his ill-chosen grumbles he will be overwhelmed with the supply of less subtle abuse reserved for such obstinacy.

Useful expressions will be,

87. *singkal ta’ mĕmbalik,*
unggun padam bara;
 a ploughshare that turns not the sod,
 a firebrand that quenches the embers;

or,

88. *chĕndawan mabok,*
 poisonous fungus,
 useless for any purpose whatsoever; or,

89. *buah bĕlolok,*
tĕrchampak ka-laut tidak di-makan ikan,
tĕrchampak ka-darat tidak di-makan ayam;
 fallen fruit,
 thrown to sea rejected by fish,
 thrown ashore rejected by fowls.

The Adat is peculiarly rich in such crushing rejoinders: doubtless because in the democratic Menangkabau States, where the custom depends for its power as much on the con-

sent of the many as on the authority of the few, the tongue, *sharper than spear or kris*, has always had need to be an effective weapon to coerce the wayward.

Part III.

Part III. Johor proverbs. The proverbs of Johor and Naning differ as strikingly as do their dialects. The dialect of the Naning Malays is the simple and ancient speech of a peasant community, with no literature worth the name. The Johor-Riau dialect, on the other hand, is not only the language of the classics of the golden age, but also a brilliant and flexible medium of intercourse, adaptable to the needs of a civilized community. The work of the Johor philological society, the P. B. M. P. B.⁽¹⁾ founded by the late Sultan, has shown how capable the language is of rendering with precision the stilted terms of official correspondence or the technicalities of jurisprudence: and no one who has lived for any time in intercourse with Johor Malays of education can fail to be delighted as well by the lucidity of their speech as by its subtlety and humour.

And so the proverbs of Johor are subtle and modern, while those of Naning are simple and ancient: love terseness and brevity, while the others indulge in balanced antitheses. Where the Naning proverbs derive their illustrations almost entirely from the homely incidents of rustic life,—the lothness of the buffalo to leave his wallow, the spinning of a top, the slicing of a pumpkin—: the proverbs of Johor record with nice minuteness such diverse phenomena as the bluster of an ignorant Kling skipper, the refinements of a Chinese card-game, or the curious movements of the wrist-hairs.

90. *Tinjau bělukar*,

the distant view of secondary jungle;

neat and regular seen from afar, but a nearer inspection discloses the undergrowth. A lady whose looks do not stand close inspection (*ta' makan tatap*).

91. *Istana rupa*,

the palace of beauty;

a handsome person, that carries off any dress or fashion.

Contrast the common proverb,

rumah burok di-sapu kapur,

an old house with a coat of whitewash: fine feathers on a poor bird.

92. *Ikan bělukang*,

the *bělukang* fish; and

(1). Pakatan Bělajar Měngajar Pěngětahuan Bahasa.

93. *Ikan juara di-bawah jamban,*
the *juara* fish below the privy;
the base scavenger fish of the ditches; the type of most ignoble servility.
94. *Běsar pasak dari tiang,*
the peg too big for the post;
expenditure out of proportion to income will cause ruin: the peg will split the post.
95. *Pantas tewas,*
haste loses;
the terser Malay equivalent of "more haste, less speed."
96. *Měmbuat kayu api,*
to treat as firewood;
to make a tool of a person; to use him cynically for one's own ends, consuming him in the process, or abandoning him when his usefulness ceases. Another proverb,
97. *Měmbuat landasan,*
to treat as a chopping-block,
has a similar significance.
98. *Mata kotak, tělinga těmpayan,*
eyes—the eyes of a Chinese boat, ears—the ears of a jar;
eyes that see, but do not perceive; ears that are open, but do not hear. The studied blindness and deafness of one who imitates the deaf adder.
99. *Kumpul kiambang,*
a clump of water-weed.
This expression is applied to
(1) a persistent importunate fellow, who when driven away returns undiscomfited, just as the water-weed pushed aside returns and covers the space of open water just cleared;
and to
(2) an unstable person; the water-weed shows a surface of solid leaves, but below there are only thin trailing roots.
100. *Salah piantan,*
missing the season;
that is, the proper rice-planting season (*piantan, piama*).
A proverbial expression for a badly-timed enterprise of any kind, especially in the sense of too late (*suntok*).
A more common proverb is,
musim kěmarau měnghilirkan balok,
launching the boat in the drought,
when the river is now too dry to float it.

- 101.** *Sěmbunyi tuma,*
the concealment of the louse;
only half-concealed; head in the sand, ostrich fashion, but tail betraying its whereabouts.
An unfriendly action insufficiently concealed, and so the author is detected. Another somewhat similar proverb is,
- 102.** *muka běr pandangan, budi kědapatan,*
meeting as friends, but the stratagem detected;
the unfriendly act is known, but appearances are maintained, although the intended victim is not deceived.
Sir W. E. Maxwell gives a different meaning to this proverb; No. 165 of his collection in Volume II.
See also *Kiliran Budi*, 445.
- 103.** *Měnjadi kueh bingka,*
to become a *bingka* cake;
a species of cake cooked with fire above and below. The expression suggests a position of some discomfort, with no escape either up or down, an extremely hot quarter; between the devil and the deep sea.
- 104.** *Makan nasi kawah,*
eating rice from the big cauldron;
still supported by one's parents; not yet possessing the cooking-pot of independence.
- 105.** *Mat di-bawah dagu,*
check-mate beneath the chin;
a disaster, whose imminency, though apparent, was overlooked.
- 106.** *Měmbuat sayur měntah,*
to treat as raw green-food;
something devoured with the greatest ease. A slang expression for an easily-defeated opponent in any contest.
- 107.** *Mata měngkudu,*
eyes of the *měngkudu* fruit;
The *měngkudu* fruit is covered with round eyes, like the markings of certain golf-balls: a fruit with many eyes, and so a type of inconstrancy; a wanton roving eye. (Compare *mata rambang*.)
- 108.** *Kěpiting batu,* a rock crab;
109. *těnggiling kěring,* an armadillo;
110. *tangkai jěring,* a *jěring* stalk;
types of three kinds of stinginess:
the crab that is hard and pinches;
the armadillo that rolls up into an unyielding ball;
the stalk so tough (*liut*) that it must be hacked completely through before the pod will come away.

111. *kasėhan kambing*,
the sympathy of the goat;
the sympathy of the lips, not of deeds.

This expression originates in the fable of the wolf who fell into a dry well. A goat came up and stood on the edge, and to every application for help replied with the one word *kasėhan*, "I deeply sympathize;" but rendered no more active assistance, until finally the wolf died.

112. *Golok Rembau*,
a Rembau knife;

a proverbial expression for a capable and intelligent supporter, especially at games such as chess. Rembau knives are noted for their keenness: the knife is the supporter (*pěndua*) of the *kėris*, as the dagger was of the mediaeval sword.

113. *Chėncharu makan pėtang*,
chėncharu fish feed late.

The expression is applied to the party in any contest, from cockfighting to football, that at first seems likely to lose, but comes out strongly at the finish: "a good finisher."

114. *Misim ikan sėpat*,
the *sėpat* fish season.

Sėpat fish are imported in large quantities at certain seasons from Siam to Singapore, and are exposed for sale salted and headless. This interesting expression means the season of the "headless fish," and so, the season of the head-hunters (*penyabit*). There have been several historical head-hunting scares in the life of Singapore, always in connection with large public works, especially those requiring deep foundations: both Chinese and Malays believe that the earth-spirits require to be appeased for such disturbance with a sacrifice of human heads.

The planting of posts for overhead electric-tram wires, the erection of Anderson Bridge, and the suspension of the harbour works in 1911, are recent occasions of such scares. The last named scare extended to remote up-country places in Johor and Malacca; and was honoured with the attention of the Executive Council of the Colony. The final failure to reach bottom at a certain point in the Telok Ayer reclamation, (where an old stream formerly debouched,) is commonly attributed to failure to satisfy the demands of the *genius loci*.

115. *Paku Bėlanda*,
a Dutch nail;

not to be extracted, and so a type of an irrevocable decision.

Another explanation, given me by a Siak Raja, is that the Dutch in former times, on the conclusion of negotiations with Sumatra chiefs, would hammer a large nail into the Council table as a symbol of the permanence of their bond.

- 116.** *Měmakai kulit rimau,*
wearing the tiger skin;
bluff; an overbearing manner without authority or courage to match. The expression is derived from the fable of the ass in the tiger skin.

- 117.** *Měmbuat hautah Suleman,*
to imitate the wiles of Suleman.

Hautah is a slang Singapore Tamil word (resembling the Malay *těmberang*), for which "brazen-facedness" is perhaps the nearest English equivalent.

Suleman was a certain Muhammadan Madrasi, notorious in Singapore a generation ago for his impudent, but successful, defiance of the law in the Police Courts of those days. He is still spoken of by his compatriots with respectful admiration. The expression means "to play the impudent hedge-lawyer."

The origin of the expression is, however, rapidly becoming lost, especially with Malays, by whom it is generally quoted as, *měmbuat otak Suleman,*

to imitate the intelligence of the Prophet Solomon; and the historic Suleman of Singapore seems likely to lose his proper fame.

The phrase is an interesting example of slang in the transition stage.

- 118.** *Měmbuat kapitan Kěling,*
to play the Kling skipper.

The Kling, acting as skipper, but ignorant of the act of navigation, when asked by the helmsman what course he is to follow, cries, "Carry on," or "The same as usual," in a loud and confident voice.

A person who is ignorant of his duties, but attempts to conceal his ignorance by bluster. * A somewhat similar proverb is,

- 119.** *Pa' Sambut,*
Father Receive.

A person who has no knowledge of his own, but carries on his work by successful picking of the brains of others.

- 120.** *Modal sambut,*
with "receive" for capital,
is another expression with the same meaning.

- 121.** *Tělinga nipis,*
thin ears;

over-sensitive: the equivalent of the English expression "thin-skinned." The phrase, derived from the sensitiveness of elephants' ears, is also used to describe a person whose leg is easily pulled.

122. *Těkukur męngikut kata,*

a dove that repeats his master's words.

A proverbial expression for implicit obedience: used of a husband's subservience to a wife; or of a handy racing-boat, or a trusty hunting-dog.

123. *Kutu ěmbun,*

dew-bugs;

A very concentrated expression. *Embun* is a synonym for night; compare the line,

siang bęrjęmur malam bęr-ěmbun.

The *kutu* is an animal remarkable for adhesiveness.

The expression describes the class of person who stays to the very end of a theatrical performance or dance, however late in the small hours. It is also used in the sense of the English slang expression "a night-bird": so, too, the Arabic word *afrit*, an evil spirit; and *hantu kubur*, a grave-ghost.

124. *Bęrpaling tadah,*

shifting sail;

changing tack; a treacherous change of front.

Tadah—"intercepting a falling object" (Wilkinson); and so here intercepting the wind, the set of the sails to the wind.

125. *Kuching kępala hitam,*

cats with black heads;

an euphemism for human thieves.

When something is missing, to say "taken, perhaps, by a cat with a black head," is to suggest suspicion of a thief in the house. Similar colloquialisms are,

tikus turi, tikus chęnchurut,

the musk-rats, that make their pilferings and nibblings unseen and unheard.

126. *Daun chęki dua lawang,*

a *chęki* card with two chances;

a double chance, two strings to one's bow.

Sęligi tajam bęrtimbal,

a dart with a sharpened butt,

often has this meaning, as well as the meaning "double-facedness," noted by Mr. Wilkinson in his paper on Malay proverbs.

Chęki dua lawang is also used colloquially to mean a lady of frail virtue. Compare the Naning proverb, *ęnau sa-batang dua sigai*, number 42 above.

For the exact meaning of the phrase see Clifford and Swettenham's Dictionary under *Chęki, tan dua lawang*.

127. *Męngheret sępil,*

dragging at a snag;

the continuous burden of some ever-present trouble, such as a jealous wife, or a protracted disease.

- 128.** *Tuan Putěri Lilin,*
Princess Wax-taper; and
- 129.** *Tuan Putěri Dahi Gula,*
Princess Sugar-Forehead;
the effeminate persons who shun going out in the sun,—it would melt the wax; or in the rain,—it would melt the sugar.
Effeminacy in any form.
- 130.** *Pandai běrsělit-sěpit,*
clever in nips and squeezes;
resource even in extreme difficulties; triumphing over obstacles.
- 131.** *Běrgolok běrgadai,*
stabbing and pawning;
resistance to the utmost, especially in litigation; when finances are exhausted there remains the resort to weapons; employing every resource.
- 132.** *Burok siku,*
rotten elbow;
to ask for the return of a gift: compare the doggerel of English children,
“Give a thing and take a thing
Is a naughty man’s plaything.”
I am unable to discover how this curious phrase came to acquire its meaning. *Siku běrulak*, is another form of it.
Another expression often used in connection with this phrase is,
- 133.** *Aku bakar bělachan di-bawah tangga-nya,*
I will burn *bělachan* below his house-ladder;
the effect of which is to produce “rottenness of elbow” in the person who demands back a thing once given. Both phrases appear to be in origin an imprecation of a curse on meanness, the elbow being the *joint* that effects the act of *withdrawal*.
- 134.** *Masok lorong sa-kěrat,*
to enter a blind alley;
there is no exit at the far end. An unprofitable undertaking: the money invested enters in, but does not emerge.
- 135.** *Běrsěrah tunggang,*
surrendering to the rider;
tame submission, especially of a wife to her husband. A concise Johor form of the proverb,
bagai onta měnyěrahkan diri,
the self-surrender of the camel.
- 136.** *Masok ambong masok ambong ta’ masok bilang,*
into the market basket, not into the account;
not worth mentioning, nothing out of the common.

The phrase is used particularly of mediocre accomplishments, or skill in games or handicrafts, passing muster, but not remarkable. Compare the English colloquialism to "pass in a crowd."

The Arabic phrase *al'akuli-hal* is used commonly in the same sense.

137. *Bukan kudis di-buat pěkong,*
not even a sore—made into a ulcer.

A slight fault exaggerated into a crime: a mountain made out of a mole-hill.

138. *Bagai labah-labah bėramu di-dalam badan sėndiri,*
like a spider building a house of its own entrails;
the self-attenuation that follows living on capital.

139. *Tangkap muat,*
packing in as you catch;
the absence of selection, the acceptance of what come first to hand. For example, as contrasted with the recruitment of the Colonial Civil Service by competitive examination, the formation of the Johor service is described by Malays as being on the principle of *tangkap muat*.

Compare a more common proverb,

140. *asal bėrsisek ikan-lah,*
anything with scales counts as fish.

Another Johor expression somewhat similar is,

141. *sifat dapat,*
taking it as you find it;

the absence of provision or preliminary inquiry. The slight difference of meaning between this phrase and *tangkap muat* may be illustrated thus: a guide is required at a certain village; *sifat dapat* would mean to rely on finding one on arrival; *tangkap muat* would mean to take the first person found without further inquiry into his abilities.

142. *Laki tangkal musang,*
a husband to scare wild-cats;

a marriage of convenience rather than affection; a marriage for the purpose of protection; a phrase commonly used by widows on their remarriage. Similar expressions are *laki pėrisai*, the "shield husband;" and *laki chėrmin muka*, the "looking-glass husband."

143. *Kalah roma,*
defeat of the wrist-hairs;

defeated before the contest begins. Where a person is extremely nervous before the beginning of a contest, Malays observe the curious phenomenon that his wrist perspires slight-

ly, and the wrist-hairs droop limply instead of standing up from the skin. The expression corresponds to the English slang, "in a blue funk."

144. *Lěpaskan batok di-tangga,*
getting rid of the cough at the top of the house-ladder; a temporary and insufficient riddance of some nuisance. The phrase is commonly used when a superior officer passes on some troublesome piece of work to a subordinate; and may be compared with the expressions *měmbuat kapitan Kěling* and *Pa' Sambut*, explained above.

145. *Alah pintak di-buat sěmpěna,*
the prayer defeated by ill-omened words; paraphrase—"the very thing desired, your very wish, would have come about, but it has been prevented by your unlucky words." A proverbial warning against unlucky words, especially against ill-omened interpretation of dreams.

The idea underlying this proverb is the idea that underlay the Greek practice of euphemism, namely, a belief in the power of suggestion both good and bad: to call the Furies "kindly" or the Euxine "hospitable" was a method for producing the desired behaviour. Compare too the idea underlying the linguistic taboos described in Skeat, *Malay Magic*.

146. *Ubat bunoh ibu,*
the remedy of "kill the mother;"
the final remedy, the destruction of the source of an evil.

For example, a Penghulu has persisted in gross misconduct after warnings; to suggest the remedy of *bunoh ibu* would be to propose his dismissal.

Applied to the trouble of a protracted illness, the expression would suggest that the disease is incurable, that death is the only cure.

147. *Pa' Pěchokok,*
Father Bathing-attendant.

An expression used in Johor to refer to a third party present on any occasion whose identity is not known to the speaker. For example, "*Pa' Pěchokok bomak agak-nya*" would mean "Our friend over there is intoxicated, I think." (*Bomak*—a disguised form of *mabok*.) It has a disparaging sense, and amounts to "Our friend over there—I don't much like the look of him."

The origin of the phrase is curious. *Běrchokok* is to splash water while bathing in a pool or river (compare *kětimpong*): *Pa' Pěchokok* is the attendant, whose duty is the not very noble or well-defined one of standing on watch at a distance while ladies are bathing. Hence the uncomplimentary significance of the term.

148. *Ta' sadar mēntua lalu,*
not noticing the mother-in-law pass by.

The Malay mother-in-law exacts considerable attention from the newly-married: to fail to observe her presence is therefore the height of blissful preoccupation.

Some light is thrown on the subject of the mother-in-law by another significant expression,

Hujan halau mēntua,

a drive-home-the-mother-in-law shower;

a passing shower only; but the threat of it suffices to send the mother-in-law hurrying home, and secures the young couple at least a temporary respite from her attentions.

149. *Ampat tiang,*
four masts;

is another colloquial expression for perfect bliss. For example,

magang ampat tiang, four masts drunk,

describes the perfect-peace-with-all-the-world stage of intoxication that comes between *mabok kayal* and *mabok bunga sēlaseh*.

The expression dates from the sensation caused among Malays by the first four-masted ship that arrived in Singapore: "four masts" became a synonym for perfection.